

# Determining the Best-Fit FPGA for a Space Mission: An Analysis of Cost, SEU Sensitivity, and Reliability



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## Outline



- FPGA selection for flight missions
- Differentiating FPGAs
- Cost Analysis
- SEE Analysis
- Expanding Evaluation Criteria
  - Limitations of Bit Error Rate Calculators
  - SET Performance Degradation Metric
  - Availability Calculation
- Applying Evaluation criteria to the selection process

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## Flight Project FPGA Selection

- Primary Considerations
  - Criticality
  - Number of Mega-Operations Per Second (MOPS)
    - Internal clock frequency
    - Number of operations performed at each clock edge
  - Area/Power restraints
  - Cost
- Analysis
  - SEE and Reliability testing
  - Integrating traditional SEE metrics with obtainable MOPs

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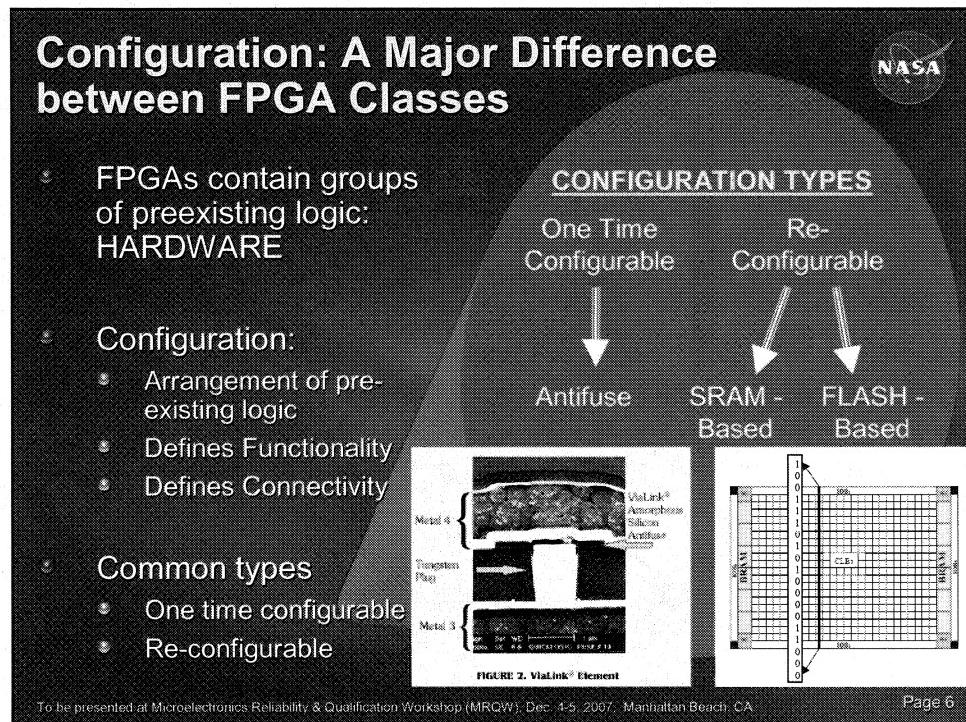
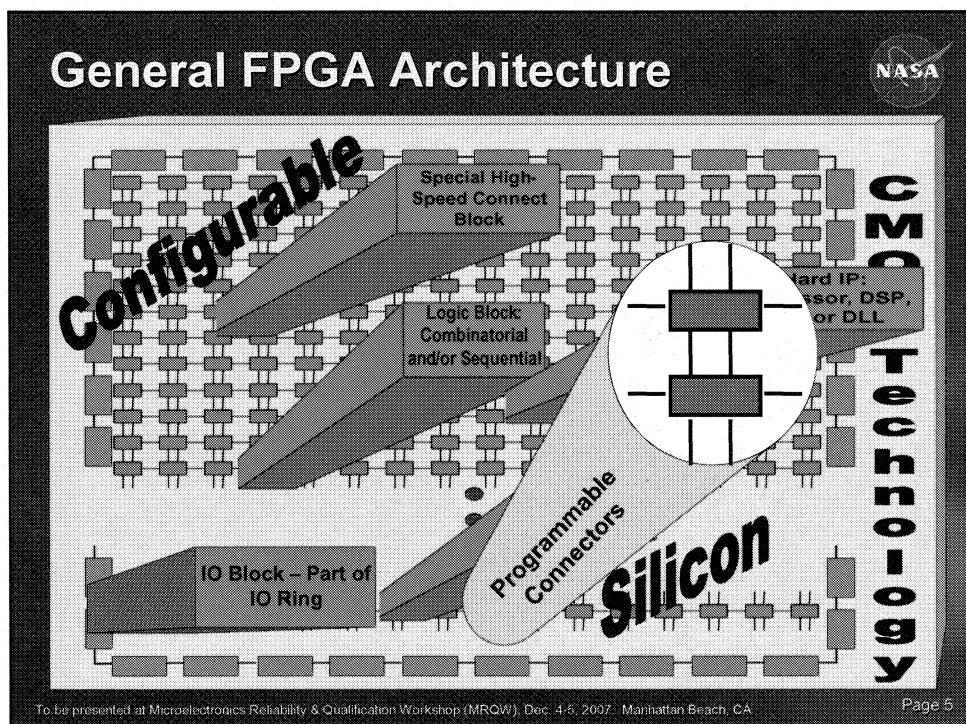
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## FPGA Characterization: Understanding the Differences to Develop a Comprehensive Analysis

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## Antifuse FPGA Devices (Actel and Aeroflex)

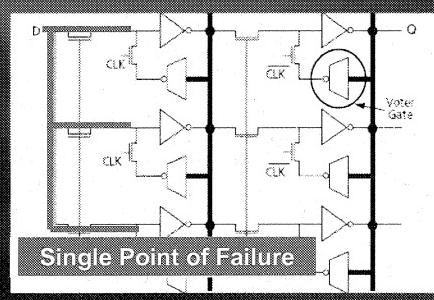
### Pros:

- Most common FPGA devices utilized for space missions - **Heritage**
- Configuration is fused (no transistors) and is thus "HARDENED" – not affected by SEUs
- Logic has embedded mitigation at each DFF (either TMR or DICE) – eases the design phase

### Cons:

- One time programmable – can complicate the design/debug phase
- Very expensive

RCELL in hardened Actel devices



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## SRAM-Based FPGA's



### Pros:

- The ability to reconfigure a function while in-flight is of great advantage to many missions
- Device is Less expensive
- Easier to debug/correct (with no mitigation)
- Performance (MOPS):
  - Speed
  - Increased User Device Resources

### Cons:

- Configuration is SRAM-based – increased sensitivity to radiation (vs. antifuse)
- Additional design complexity necessary for mitigation
- Additional hardware necessary for (re)configuration

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**What Xilinx Does Well: Frequency and Number of Mega-Operations per Second:**

$$T_{clockperiod} = \frac{1}{f}$$

$$\text{NMOPS} = f^*k$$

NASA

K: Resource and speed Dependent

Xilinx Virtex Series can supply a high frequency (f) with a large K value. NMOPS is very large compared to many other FPGA manufacturers

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## Xilinx FPGAs in Space: Configuration and Scrubbing

NASA

**Minimal Requirements for Flight:**

- Full Reconfigure
- To increase availability: use Scrubber
- Configuration Manager can be combined with external scrubber

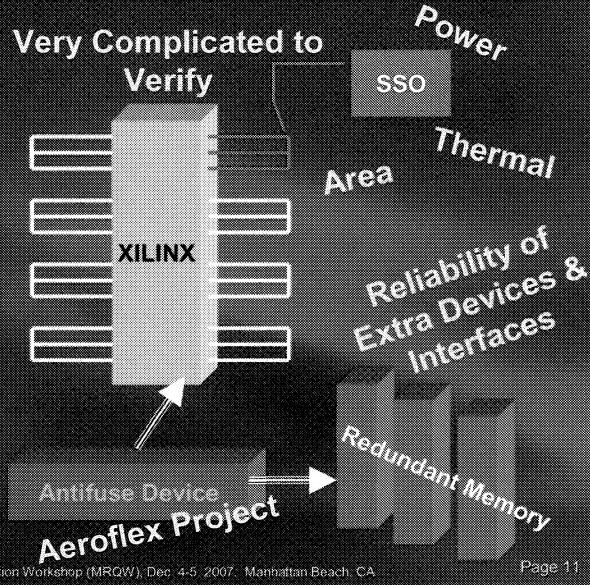
Extra circuitry is required regardless in order to configure/re-configure

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## Criticality and Xilinx: Proposed Solution: Full TMR

- \* Triple the design within the Xilinx FPGA device (including I/O)
- \* User implemented (can lengthen design cycle)
- \* Will consume >> 3x of original area
- \* Difficult to implement multiple clock domains
- \* Use an external FPGA device to scrub the configuration memory



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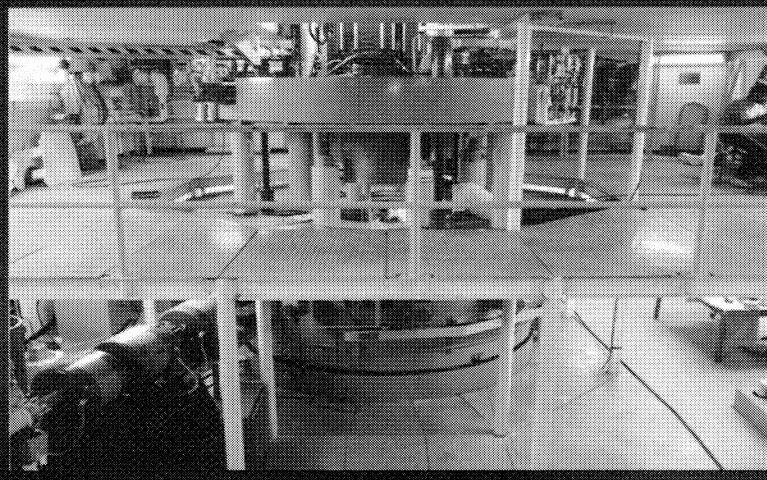
## Cost Analysis

- \* Missions do not generally require a large number of replicated FPGA devices
- \* Cost of a mission will not rely on FPGA device cost
- \* Design cycle can grossly affect cost:
  - \* Complexity of design architecture:
    - \* One FPGA can not handle required number of operations per second.
    - \* Chosen FPGA can not handle availability specifications – additional/complex mitigation is required.
  - \* Complexity of verification
  - \* Complexity of Board
  - \* Poor choice in emulation or engineering models
- \* Choose the FPGA that best meets requirements!**

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## Determining Reliability and Availability: Radiation Testing and SEE Analysis



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## Investigating Radiation Effects (SEE Analysis)



- Determine Bit sensitivity
  - Flip Flops
  - Configuration (SRAM based technology)
- Availability analysis
  - Given a function to implement – what is the percentage of time the output is correct vs. incorrect
  - Determine an availability rating that considers
    - Operational Frequency
    - Fluence
    - Repair time
    - Burst time

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# What Function to Implement for Testing?



## Simple Architecture

- No functional Masking
- Easy to base-line across FPGAs
- Reduces Test time
- increases state space coverage

## Complex Architecture

- Functional Masking
- Minimal state space coverage (short test runs – reset upon error)
- Only significant for specific design

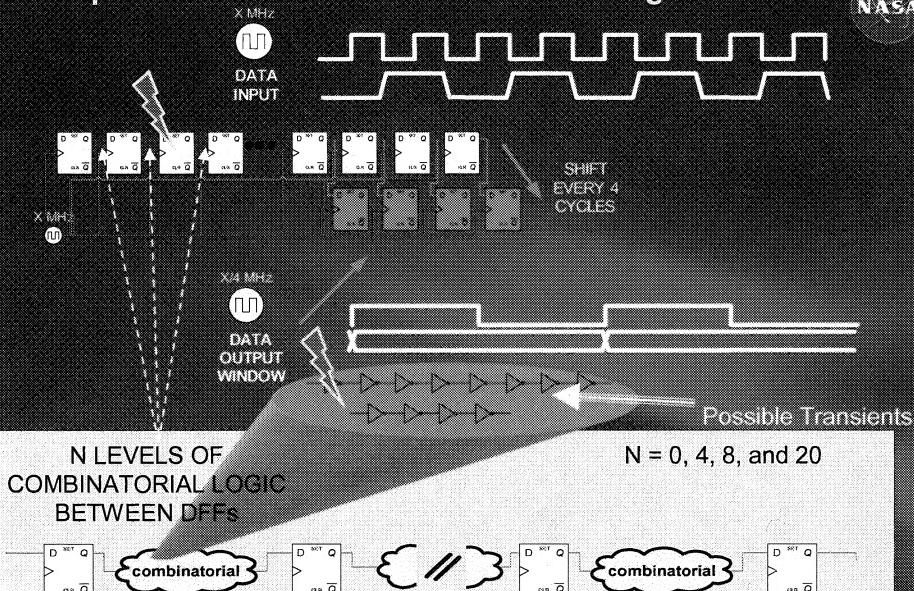
## Actual flight Architecture

- Usually not available at test time
- Can be very expensive to test
- Can not cover a significant amount of state space while testing
- Usually have to start from scratch at every error event

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## Simple Architecture: Windowed Shift Register



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## Calculating Error Cross Sections

Traditional

$$\sum \frac{\text{Events}}{\text{Fluence}}$$

error  
calculation

- TF: Total Effective Fluence
- TB: Time in Burst
- Flux: particles/second

Error calculation:  
Bursts within data

$$\sum \text{Events}$$

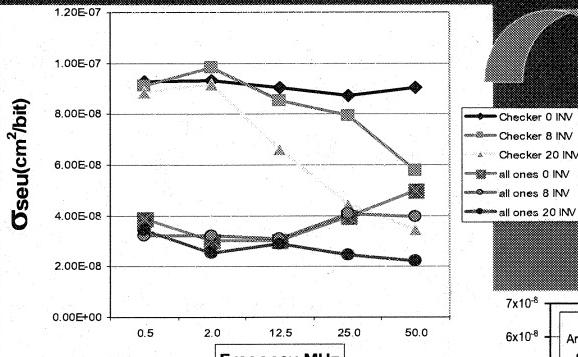
$$TF - (TB * FLUX)$$

- Analysis of event frequency
- Cross section fed to error rate calculator based off of a cumulative distribution probability function ( $P(T > t)$ )
- We are not analyzing how long we are in error

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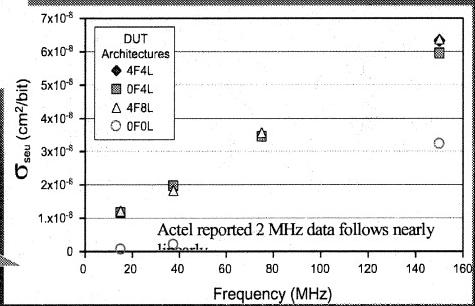
## Clock Frequency Effects 54MeV\*cm<sup>2</sup>/mg:



Aeroflex:

$\sigma$  decreases as Frequency increases

Most significant with larger  
combinatorial logic  
structures due to the  
increased number of paths



Actel  
 $\sigma$  decreases as Frequency decreases

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## Error Cross-Section Results Prove for Antifuse Devices...

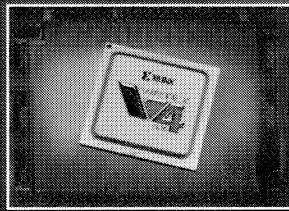
- Static testing is not sufficient
- Static simulation is not sufficient
- Assumptions of frequency response can not automatically be made
  - Actel produced expected (traditional) response
  - Aeroflex – unexpected... combinatorial logic acts as transient filter

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## REAG Testing of Xilinx SRAM-Based FPGAs.



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## Scrubbing Facts:

- Most SRAM based FPGA faults are believed to occur in configuration memory
  - Correction of fault can only be accomplished by:
    - Reconfiguration – can be costly (time wise)
    - Scrubbing
  - Reconfiguration brings down the system
  - While scrubbing, the system is fully operational.
  - Scrubbing does not reduce the probability of an upset occurring
  - Frequency of scrubbing can reduce the amount of time the upset is present in the configuration memory
  - Unable to scrub everything
- Warning: High Current spikes observed by Xilinx consortium:**
- Observed @ fluence =  $1e08$  ( $1e05 < \text{flux} < 1e06$ ): FLUX is extremely accelerated for scrubbing mitigation technique
  - Readback+CRC is performed at every frame – different than blind-scrubber of REAG
  - REAG did not observe event... tests performed with flux  $< 1e03$

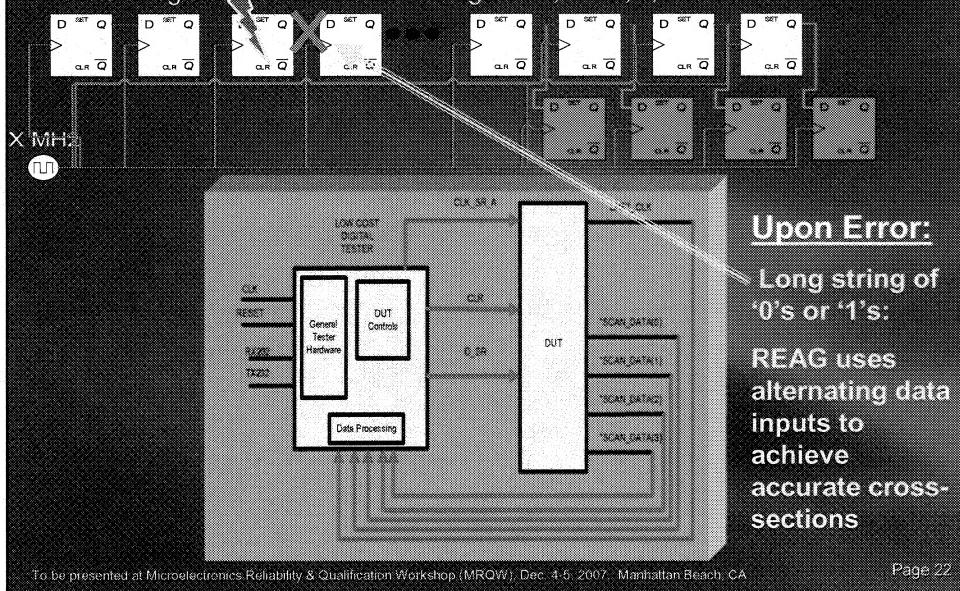
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## Non-TMR Windowed Architecture

N levels of logic between DFFS ... 2 strings each; N = 0, 8, and 20



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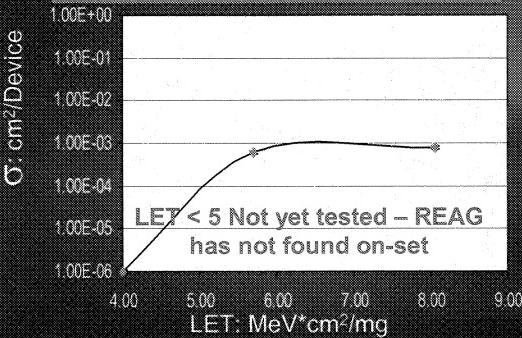
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## Error Cross Section Calculation: Dealing with Bursts



$$\sigma \cong \frac{NE}{TFL - (TB * FLUX)}$$

Can not make direct comparison with  
Antifuse device bit error rate



Cross-section based  
off of functional  
upsets (shift register)  
Simultaneous Multiple  
errors exist in shift  
register

Count burst as one  
error event

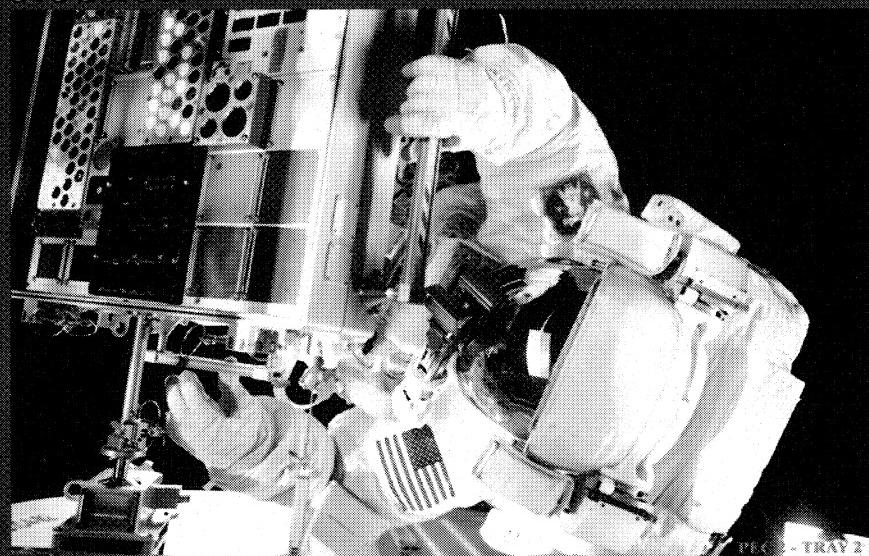
Burst can potentially  
mask faults

- \* could have a much higher frequency of events
- \* just masked by burst
- \* Will be further investigated by fault injection

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## Evaluation Criteria and Device Selection



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## Limitations with Error Cross Sections as sole Evaluation Criteria

- Frequency Effect Analysis and Successful Operations per second:

DUTA:@100MHz over 1E07 fluence: no bursts 10 errors

DUTB:@ 50MHz over 1E07 fluence: no bursts 5 errors

$$\sigma_A = 2 * \sigma_B; \text{ Assumes constant error rate per frequency}$$

Common Interpretation: Cross Section increases with Frequency –  
Decrease Clock Rate for Critical Missions

- However, B has to run twice as long as A to complete the same number of successful operations.
- Illustrates that per number of completed operations, each has the same probability to accumulate an equivalent number of errors

**In this case: Slower Clock does not influence errors per successful operation**

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## Limitations with Error Cross Sections as sole Evaluation Criteria (Continued)

### Burst Analysis:

- Cross section probability calculation is based off of Event frequency (not event duration).
- Cross section does not consider burst or repair time (availability)

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## Bit Error Rate Misconceptions:

- Given a Bit Error rate of 5e-08, what does this mean???

### AntiFuse

- Bit Error Rate is based on DFFs
- Number of DFFs will be from a few hundred to 10's of thousands
- Comes out to about 1 error every 10,000 days or better**

### SRAM

- Generally pertains to configuration bit rate
- If for example 1e7 bits can affect the design upon upset – then can have **1 upset every 2 days**

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## SET Performance Metric:

- Given a failure rate (worse-case is bit-error rate): MTTF
- Determines required operational frequency and necessary parallelism
- $NOP_{target}$ : Targeted Number of operations
- $F*k$ : operational frequency \* implemented number of operations (each cycle)
- $ECi$ : Number of clock cycles of error per event i
- $Cyc_{rad}$ : Total number of operational clock cycles during irradiation
- Acc: Acceleration Factor

$$f*k = \frac{NOP_{target}}{MTTF} \left\{ \frac{1.0}{1.0 - \frac{1.0}{Acc} * \left( \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{ECi}{Cyc_{rad}} \right)} \right\}$$

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## Availability Calculation using Radiation Data

$MTTF$

$$A = \frac{MTTF}{MTTR + MTTF} \quad A = 1 \text{ is a perfect system}$$

### A: Steady State Availability

LET = 8MeV*cm <sup>2</sup> /mg	MTTR	MTTF	A steady State
RTAX @150MHz	$6.67 \times 10^{-9}$	$3.6 \times 10^5 \text{ AccR}$	$(3.6 \times 10^5 \text{ AccR}) / (6.67 \times 10^{-9} + 3.6 \times 10^5 \text{ AccR})$
Aeroflex @ 100MHz	$10^{-8}$	$6.0 \times 10^5 \text{ AccA}$	$(6.0 \times 10^5 \text{ AccA}) / (10^{-8} + 6.0 \times 10^5 \text{ AccA})$
Xilinx @ 100MHz	$1.6 \times 10^{-2}$	$41 \text{ AccX}$	$(41 \text{ AccX}) / (1.6 \times 10^{-2} + 41 \text{ AccX})$

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## Mission Device Selection

- Xilinx showed a relatively low availability rating at 100MHz.
  - If used at full rate, will achieve much higher operations per second.
  - Higher MOPS can include scheduled downtime and may be a great fit.
- Criticality and reliability play a major role in device selection
  - Missions have traditionally chosen antifuse devices for critical specifications.
    - Actel has been in the forefront
    - Aeroflex is very promising with its combinatorial transient filtering.
  - For less critical functionality, SRAM devices are being heavily investigated

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## Embedded vs. User Implemented TMR



- Discrete state space is  $\approx 2^{\#DFFs}$
- Add XTMR to Xilinx
  - \* Observed area increase @ 5x and 6x
  - \* I/O speed may be jeopardized (Simultaneously Switching Signals)
  - \* Internal operational speed can be decreased

	Clock Speeds	Contains Mitigation	# FLIP FLOPS	# User TMR FLIP FLOPS
ACT2	<10 MHz	NO	<400 to 1000	<400 to 1000
RTSX	< 50 MHz	Yes	<2000 to 4000	<2000 to 4000
RTAXS	<200 MHz	Yes	<21,000	<21,000
XILINX V4 LX25	< 400 MHz	NO	<22,000	<5,000
XILINX V4 FX60	< 400 MHz	NO	<52,000	<10,000

\* Not datasheet clock speeds ... actual design clock speeds

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## Understand Requirements – Select Wisely



If criticality (reliability and availability) is essential:

- \* Antifuse FPGAs provide safer solutions
- \* Antifuse FPGAs can shorten the design cycle – More Cost Effective
  - \* Verification is eased (mitigation is embedded and does not have to be verified)
  - \* Board design is simplified – do not have to triple I/O (signal integrity requirements)
  - \* Multiple clock domains are easier to implement

If MOPS is essential

- \* SRAM based design can ease the design cycle (without additional TMR)
  - \* Available IP cores
  - \* Re-programmability
  - \* Number of high speed available resources
- \* SRAM based FPGA currently provide the fastest internal clocking (internal DLL + multiple embedded Power PCs)

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## Summary

- Each FPGA type has its advantages. SEE analysis must take this into account for a comprehensive comparison
- Sensitivity calculations are provided to missions to assist in the selection process.
  - Test to determine additional mitigation schemes required per FPGA
  - Bit Error calculations
  - Availability and degradation analysis
- Formulae have been presented:
  - Adjust Bit error calculations due to long bursts
  - SET Performance degradation Metric
  - Availability
- Mission Cost and design cycle are directly related.
  - Keep designs simple
  - Each FPGA has its advantages
  - Choose the best fit FPGA for your mission specifications

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**Thank You ....  
Questions?**

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